
The
Neighbour

Table of Contents

Introductory Questions....3
The Neighbour....4
Reading Comprehension Questions....13
True or False....15
Essential Vocabulary....17
What is the Correct Synonym?....19
What is the Correct Antonym?....20
Gap Fill Exercise....21
Words and Meanings....23
Discussion Questions....26
Role Play....29
Writing....31
Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers....33
True or False — Answers....35
What is the Correct Synonym — Answers....37
What is the Correct Antonym — Answers....38
Gap Fill Exercise — Answers....39
Words and Meanings — Answers....41
Credits....44

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Introductory Questions

1. Do you have any elderly neighbours?
2. Do you talk to them?
3. If so, what do you talk about?

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The Neighbour

I'd been living in my new house for about a month before I finally met my next-door neighbour, Mr Jones.

I'd seen him a few times, usually through the kitchen window while I was washing up. He was an older man with thick white hair who seemed to spend a great deal of time looking after his garden.

Sometimes I'd catch sight of him through his front window as I left for work in the morning.

But we'd never actually spoken.

One Saturday morning, I stood in my back garden, looking at the grass. It was getting ridiculously long.

Everyone else in our little cul-de-sac had neat lawns and beautifully maintained gardens. Mine was beginning to look like an abandoned field.

The problem was my lawnmower.

My brother-in-law had given it to me when I moved in. It was ancient, and he'd warned me that it wasn't particularly reliable.

Now, after several attempts to start it, I was beginning to think it had finally packed up.

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I pulled the starter cord again.

Nothing.

I gave it another pull.

Still nothing.

"Having a bit of trouble there?"

I looked up.

An elderly man was smiling at me over the garden fence. He had a friendly face and a thick head of white hair.

It was my neighbour.

"Yes," I said, standing up. "I think this old thing has had enough. Looks like I'll have to buy a new one."

"Well, we all get old eventually," he said, laughing. "Would you like to borrow mine?"

I'd seen his lawnmower before. It was a shiny green machine that seemed to glide effortlessly across his perfect lawn.

"That's very kind of you," I said. "But I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble."

"Nonsense. I'll bring it round."

Before I could say another word, he'd disappeared behind the fence.

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A minute later, he appeared at the side of my house, pushing his lawnmower.

He plugged it into the extension cable I'd brought outside and showed me how to use it.

Within half an hour, my lawn looked completely different.

"Much better," he said, admiring our work.

I thanked him and offered to make him a cup of tea.

"Now, that's an offer I can't refuse."

We sat in my kitchen and introduced ourselves properly.

His name was George Jones.

He told me he'd lived next door for nearly thirty years.

"My wife died a few years ago," he said. "It's just me now."

I told him I was sorry to hear that.

"Oh, it's all right. You get used to being on your own."

He had a daughter, he explained, but she lived a long way away with her husband and children.

"She's got her own life to lead," he said. "Can't expect her to come running down here every five minutes."

We talked about the neighbourhood, our families and our jobs. Then, somehow, the conversation turned to sport.

"Do you follow football?" he asked.

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"Not really. Never been much of a football fan."

"Neither have I."

"Cricket's more my thing."

His face lit up.

"Cricket! Now you're talking!"

It turned out that George was a lifelong cricket enthusiast.

We spent the next hour discussing England's chances in the next Test series and arguing about some of the great players we'd watched over the years.

It was wonderful to meet someone who enjoyed cricket as much as I did. Most of my friends preferred football or rugby, and whenever we went to the pub, there was always some important football match on the television.

George and I could have talked all afternoon.

And that was how our friendship began.

Over the following weeks, we saw more and more of each other.

Sometimes George would knock on my door and ask whether I'd heard the latest cricket result. Other times, I'd pop round to his house with a newspaper or simply to have a chat.

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We often sat in his living room, drinking tea and listening to the cricket commentary on the radio.

George had an old-fashioned radio on a little table beside his armchair. He said he'd owned it for years and had no intention of replacing it.

"Still works perfectly well," he told me. "Why waste money on a new one?"

He had strong opinions about almost everything, but he was never unpleasant about them. We could disagree about something and still end up laughing.

I began to look forward to our conversations.

Living alone in a new house could sometimes feel rather lonely, especially in the evenings. Having George next door made the place feel more like home.

One afternoon, he knocked on my door looking rather embarrassed.

"Sorry to bother you," he said. "I've got a little problem in the kitchen. Wondered if you might be able to help."

His water heater had stopped working.

I'd worked with electrical equipment for years, so I offered to take a look.

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Fortunately, it turned out to be a simple problem with a loose connection. Once I'd safely isolated the power and fixed it, the heater started working again.

George was delighted.

"You're a lifesaver," he said. "I was beginning to think I'd have to call somebody out."

"Well, you saved me from buying a lawnmower. I suppose we're even now."

He laughed and put the kettle on.

Despite the difference in our ages, we'd become good friends. George was easy to talk to, and I enjoyed hearing his stories about the old days.

There was something comforting about knowing he was next door.

Then, one morning, something happened that I would never forget.

I was leaving for work when I noticed a car pull up outside George's house.

A woman got out. She looked to be in her forties, with dark hair and a serious expression.

There was something familiar about her face.

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Then I realised she had George's eyes.

I remembered him telling me about his daughter, and I wondered whether she'd come for a visit.

As I walked towards my car, I called out to her.

"Excuse me. Are you George's daughter?"

She turned and looked at me.

"Yes. That's right."

"Oh, hello. I'm his next-door neighbour. I've only been living here a couple of months."

"Hello," she said, giving me a faint smile.

"I've heard quite a bit about you from your dad."

Her smile disappeared.

"Have you?"

"Yes. Lovely man, your father. He's been a great help since I moved in."

She stared at me.

"I'm sorry?"

"He helped me out with my garden when my lawnmower broke down. And we've become good friends since then."

She didn't say anything.

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"We're both mad about cricket," I continued. "Spend hours listening to it on the radio. Your dad certainly knows his stuff."

The woman frowned.

"Who did you say you were?"

I told her my name again and pointed towards my house.

"I live just there. Next door."

She looked at my house, then back at me.

"And you've been speaking to my father?"

"Of course. All the time."

She took a small step backwards.

"I don't understand."

I laughed nervously.

"Well, there's nothing to understand, really. He's a lovely bloke. I was only round there yesterday afternoon. We had a cup of tea and listened to the cricket."

The colour seemed to drain from her face.

"Yesterday?"

"Yes. About four o'clock, I think."

She shook her head slowly.

"That's impossible."

I didn't know what to say.

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"Sorry?"

She glanced towards the house, then back at me.

"Are you telling me you've actually been inside that house? With my father?"

"Yes. Several times."

She put a hand against her car to steady herself.

I was beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"Look, is something wrong?"

She stared at me for a long moment.

Then she spoke, her voice barely above a whisper.

"My father passed away last year."

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Reading Comprehension Questions

1. How long had the narrator lived in their new house before meeting Mr. Jones?

2. What had the narrator noticed about Mr Jones before they first spoke?

3. What problem did the narrator have with their lawnmower?

4. How did Mr. Jones offer to help the narrator with their lawnmower?

5. What sport did the narrator and Mr. Jones both have an interest in?

6. Describe George's family situation.

7. What did George and the narrator often do together after they became friends?

8. What kind of help did George ask the narrator for one day?

9. How did the narrator feel about their friendship with George?

10. Who did the narrator meet outside George's house one morning?

11. How did the narrator describe their friendship with George to his daughter?

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12. How did George's daughter react when the narrator mentioned George's help in the garden?

13. What did the narrator insist about seeing George recently?

14. What was the woman's response when the narrator mentioned seeing George the previous day?

15. What information did the woman reveal about George?

16. What was wrong with George's water heater?

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True or False

Look at all the true or false statements below.

State whether they are true or false according to the story.

You can find all the answers at the end of the lesson plan!

The narrator had lived in their new house for several years.

The narrator and Mr. Jones had frequent interactions before their first meeting.

The narrator's lawnmower was in perfect working condition.

Mr. Jones offered to lend the narrator his lawnmower.

The narrator was initially reluctant to accept Mr Jones's offer.

Mr. Jones was hesitant to help the narrator with the lawnmower.

The narrator and Mr. Jones bonded over their shared love for football.

The narrator and Mr. Jones enjoyed listening to cricket on the radio together.

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George, the narrator's neighbour, had a daughter who lived nearby.

The narrator fixed George's kitchen water heater easily.

George's daughter was surprised to hear about her father's friendship with the narrator.

The narrator saw George's daughter outside her father's house.

George's daughter confirmed that her father had passed away the previous year.

The narrator had never met George's daughter before that day.

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Essential Vocabulary

trouble	impossible	looking after
steady herself	house	extension cable
garden	packed up	starter cord
yesterday	cup of tea	cricket
effortlessly	enthusiast	frowned
commentary	lawnmower	replacing
admiring	loose connection	borrow
isolated	faint smile	whisper
kitchen	embarrassed	passed away

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Lawnmower — *Noun. A mechanical device equipped with rotating blades, used for cutting and maintaining the grass in gardens, lawns, or outdoor areas.*

Impossible — *Adjective. Incapable of occurring, being achieved, or existing within the bounds of known laws, rules, or possibilities; beyond the realm of feasibility or practicality.*

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Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

The noisy lawnmower woke up the entire neighbourhood early on Sunday morning.

Sarah thought it was impossible to finish the marathon, but she pushed through and crossed the finish line.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

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What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the words on the left with their matching synonym on the right.

A synonym is a word of similar meaning.

You can find the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Neighbour	Yard
Interactions	Motor
Washing	Person living nearby
Dishes	Adult female
Garden	Amicable
Trouble	Early part of the day
Friendly	Difficulty
Engine	Discussion
Embarrassed	Plates
Friendship	Comprehend
Conversation	Companionship
Died	Self-conscious
Understand	Cleaning
Morning	Passed away
Woman	Dealings

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What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the words on the left with their matching antonym on the right.

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning.

You can find the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Friendly	Terrible
Tidy	Cruel
Skilful	Meaningless
Unique	Hindering
Meaningful	Hostile
Fantastic	Stale
Admirable	Clumsy
Deep	Complicated
Immaculate	Clear-headed
Kind	Despicable
Confused	Dirty
Firm	Common
Refreshing	Messy
Simple	Weak
Helpful	Shallow

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Gap Fill Exercise

Look at the table of words below.

Now put each of these words in the correct place in all the gaps in the sentences.

You can check all your answers at the end of the lesson plan!

month	demonstration	daughter
kitchen	cricket	background
lawnmower	rugby	electrics
trouble	garage	belongings
friendly	friendship	puzzled

She's a very _____ neighbour who always says hello with a smile.

I need to find a place in the _____ to store my bicycle.

The _____ in the old building needed to be completely rewired for safety.

My favourite _____ is December because of the festive holiday season.

I'm going to the _____ to prepare dinner for my family.

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Their _____ has lasted for years because they always support each other.

_____ is a popular sport in many countries, especially in England and India.

It's time to cut the grass, so I'll need to start the _____.

Don't forget to pack your _____ before we leave for the trip.

His _____ in finance helped him excel in his career as a financial analyst.

I hope there won't be any _____ during our trip.

My _____ is excited about her upcoming school play.

_____ can be quite a physically demanding sport due to the tackling and the scrums.

The instructor gave a practical _____ of how to use the equipment.

She looked _____ when she couldn't find her keys, but then she remembered she left them in the car.

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Words and Meanings

Look at the table of words below.

Now match each word with the correct meaning below the table.

You can check all your answers at the end of the lesson plan!

neighbour	starter cord	enthusiast
commentary	effortlessly	ancient
packed up	replacing	lifelong
looking after	isolated	embarrassed
abandoned	loose connection	familiar
lawnmower	delighted	admiring
refuse	comforting	frowned
trouble	friendship	nervously
steady herself	faint	whisper

In a worried or anxious way.

Left behind and no longer used or cared for.

A person who lives near or next to you.

Feeling awkward, ashamed or self-conscious.

Very pleased.

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A relationship between people who like and care about each other.

Moved the eyebrows together to show worry, confusion or displeasure.

Someone who is very interested in a particular activity or subject.

Lasting for the whole of someone’s life.

Looking at something with pleasure or approval.

A cord that you pull to start an engine.

A point where parts are not firmly joined, which may prevent equipment from working properly.

Not strong, bright or clear; barely noticeable.

Without difficulty or great effort.

Keep herself balanced and prevent herself from falling.

Taking care of someone or something.

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To say that you will not accept something or do something.

A very quiet way of speaking, using the breath rather than the full voice.

Making someone feel less worried, sad or lonely.

A machine used for cutting grass on a lawn.

Stopped working.

Putting something new in the place of something else.

Disconnected from other things; in an electrical system, separated from its power supply.

Known or recognised from previous experience.

Problems or difficulties.

A spoken description of an event as it happens, especially on radio or television.

Very old.

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Discussion Questions

1. What is the significance of the title, "The Neighbour," in this story?

2. How does the narrator initially perceive Mr. Jones, their neighbour?

3. What does the narrator notice about Mr Jones during their brief sightings before they meet in person?

4. How does the broken lawnmower lead to the narrator's first real interaction with Mr. Jones?

5. Why does Mr. Jones offer to lend the narrator his lawnmower, and how does this act impact their relationship?

6. Describe the similarities and differences between the narrator and Mr. Jones in terms of their lives and interests.

7. How does the shared passion for cricket strengthen the bond between the narrator and Mr. Jones?

8. What is the significance of George's wife's death and his daughter living far away in the story?

9. How does the narrator's willingness to help with George's kitchen water heater issue further solidify their friendship?

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10. Discuss the role of unexpected friendships in our lives. How can they enrich our experiences?

11. Why do you think the narrator didn't realize the truth about George's situation earlier?

12. How does the introduction of George's daughter change the narrator's perspective on their friendship with George?

13. What is the impact of the daughter's revelation that her father passed away last year on the narrator?

14. How might the narrator react to the possibility that George was a ghost?

15. Reflect on the idea of human connections and the way they transcend time and even death in this story.

16. Do you believe in the possibility of supernatural encounters or connections with the deceased? Why or why not?

17. If you were in the narrator's position, how would you feel about the interactions with the ghost of George?

18. How might the narrator's perception of their own life and the meaning of friendship change after this experience?

19. What do you think the author is trying to convey about the nature of human relationships through this story?

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20. Can you share a personal experience of a surprising or unexpected encounter with a neighbour or stranger that had a significant impact on your life?

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Role Play

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

The Narrator from the story above.

A Police Officer who wishes to talk to the narrator.

The Situation

After the narrator told George's daughter that he had met her father several times, she became very alarmed.

Maybe a man broke into the house and claimed to be her deceased father.

Or maybe the narrator is trying to play some very unkind trick on her.

Either way, she wants to get to the bottom of it.

So she called the police.

Now, a police officer is talking to the narrator about what he saw and to describe the man he saw.

The Police Officer

You just want to understand what is going on here.

All you know is that a person living next door to an empty house, claims to have seen the previous owner and spoken to him. But this man died a year ago.

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So what exactly did the narrator see?
And who did he talk to?

The Narrator

You are very confused.
You now doubt what and who you spoke to.
You realise now that George is no longer alive. So who exactly did you speak to?
Now you have to present all your story and what happened to the police.
And you don't want them to think you are crazy.
What can you say?
What story can you tell them?

In pairs, take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready, stand in front of the class and perform your role play.

In the class, all the students should give feedback on every role play they see.
Your teacher can also give some feedback too.

Have fun!

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Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to write a short story. It is a continuation of the story you read at the beginning of the lesson.

The title of the story is:

The Old Man Next Door

In this exercise, you are going to take on the role of the narrator in the story at the beginning of the lesson.

You have spoken to George's daughter. And she notified the police and you spoke to them too.

Now you are alone in your house.

You feel strange about the events that you experienced. And the fact that you are sure you were speaking to a living, breathing human being!

As you sit alone in your house with your thoughts, you hear a noise from the house next door.
You go to your kitchen and look out the window.

And you see George in his own garden.

What do you do?
Do you go outside and talk to him?

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Or do you stay inside your house?

Maybe you call the police…
But what could you possibly tell them?

Or maybe George decides to pay you a visit.
Did you lock the back door?

Think about all the possible events that could take place.

Now write your story.

When you have finished writing your story, stand in front of the class and read it out loud to all your classmates.
They can give you some feedback on your writing.

Or you can hand it in to your teacher for a review.

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Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

1. About a month.

2. He was an older man with thick white hair who spent a lot of time looking after his garden. The narrator also sometimes saw him through his front window.

3. It was ancient and unreliable, and would not start despite repeated pulls on the starter cord.

4. He offered to lend his lawnmower, brought it round and showed the narrator how to use it.

5. Cricket.

6. His wife had died a few years earlier. His daughter lived a long way away with her husband and children, so George lived alone.

7. They visited each other, chatted, drank tea and listened to cricket commentary on the radio.

8. He asked the narrator to look at his kitchen water heater, which had stopped working.

9. The narrator enjoyed the friendship and looked forward to their conversations. Having George next door felt comforting and made the new house feel more like home.

10. George's daughter.

11. The narrator said that George had been a great help, that they had become good friends and that they both loved cricket and listened to it together.

12. She stared at the narrator, seemed confused and questioned what the narrator was saying.

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13. The narrator insisted that they had been at George’s house the previous afternoon, at about four o’clock, drinking tea and listening to cricket.

14. The colour drained from her face. She shook her head and said it was impossible.

15. George had passed away the previous year.

16. It had a loose connection. The narrator safely isolated the power and fixed the connection.

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True or False — Answers

Below are all the correct answers.

Did you get them all right?

The narrator had lived in their new house for several years. False

The narrator and Mr. Jones had frequent interactions before their first meeting. False

The narrator's lawnmower was in perfect working condition. False

Mr. Jones offered to lend the narrator his lawnmower. True

The narrator was initially reluctant to accept Mr Jones’s offer. True

Mr. Jones was hesitant to help the narrator with the lawnmower. False

The narrator and Mr. Jones bonded over their shared love for football. False

The narrator and Mr. Jones enjoyed listening to cricket on the radio together. True

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George, the narrator's neighbour, had a daughter who lived nearby. False

The narrator fixed George's kitchen water heater easily. True

George's daughter was surprised to hear about her father's friendship with the narrator. True

The narrator saw George's daughter outside her father's house. True

George's daughter confirmed that her father had passed away the previous year. True

The narrator had never met George's daughter before that day. True

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What is the Correct Synonym — Answers

These are the answers below.

How many did you get right?

Neighbour	Person living nearby
Interactions	Dealings
Washing	Cleaning
Dishes	Plates
Garden	Yard
Trouble	Difficulty
Friendly	Amicable
Engine	Motor
Embarrassed	Self-conscious
Friendship	Companionship
Conversation	Discussion
Died	Passed away
Understand	Comprehend
Morning	Early part of the day
Woman	Adult female

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What is the Correct Antonym — Answers

These are the answers below.

Did you get them all correct?

Friendly	Hostile
Tidy	Messy
Skilful	Clumsy
Unique	Common
Meaningful	Meaningless
Fantastic	Terrible
Admirable	Despicable
Deep	Shallow
Immaculate	Dirty
Kind	Cruel
Confused	Clear-headed
Firm	Weak
Refreshing	Stale
Simple	Complicated
Helpful	Hindering

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Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

How did you do?

Month: My favourite month is December because of the festive holiday season.

Kitchen: I'm going to the kitchen to prepare dinner for my family.

Lawnmower: It's time to cut the grass, so I'll need to start the lawnmower.

Trouble: I hope there won't be any trouble during our trip.

Friendly: She's a very friendly neighbour who always says hello with a smile.

Demonstration: The instructor gave a practical demonstration of how to use the equipment.

Cricket: Cricket is a popular sport in many countries, especially in England and India.

Rugby: Rugby can be quite a physically demanding sport due to the tackling and the scrums.

Garage: I need to find a place in the garage to store my bicycle.

Friendship: Their friendship has lasted for years because they always support each other.

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Daughter: My daughter is excited about her upcoming school play.

Background: His background in finance helped him excel in his career as a financial analyst.

Electrics: The electrics in the old building needed to be completely rewired for safety.

Belongings: Don't forget to pack your belongings before we leave for the trip.

Puzzled: She looked puzzled when she couldn't find her keys, but then she remembered she left them in the car.

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Words and Meanings — Answers

These are all the correct answers.

How many did you get right?

Neighbour: A person who lives near or next to you.

Starter cord: A cord that you pull to start an engine.

Enthusiast: Someone who is very interested in a particular activity or subject.

Commentary: A spoken description of an event as it happens, especially on radio or television.

Effortlessly: Without difficulty or great effort.

Ancient: Very old.

Packed up: Stopped working.

Replacing: Putting something new in the place of something else.

Lifelong: Lasting for the whole of someone's life.

Looking after: Taking care of someone or something.

Isolated: Disconnected from other things; in an electrical system, separated from its power supply.

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Embarrassed: Feeling awkward, ashamed or self-conscious.

Abandoned: Left behind and no longer used or cared for.

Loose connection: A point where parts are not firmly joined, which may prevent equipment from working properly.

Familiar: Known or recognised from previous experience.

Lawnmower: A machine used for cutting grass on a lawn.

Delighted: Very pleased.

Admiring: Looking at something with pleasure or approval.

Refuse: To say that you will not accept something or do something.

Comforting: Making someone feel less worried, sad or lonely.

Frowned: Moved the eyebrows together to show worry, confusion or displeasure.

Trouble: Problems or difficulties.

Friendship: A relationship between people who like and care about each other.

Nervously: In a worried or anxious way.

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Steady herself: Keep herself balanced and prevent herself from falling.

Faint: Not strong, bright or clear; barely noticeable.

Whisper: A very quiet way of speaking, using the breath rather than the full voice.

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